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INTERIM REPORT FOR
THE INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT FOUNDATION
January - July 2020

Name of project:

People And Elephants Amicably Co-existing (PEACE) Conflict Mitigation Program, Namibia

Project Start Date: February 2020 | **Project End date:** February 2021

Name of investigators	Affiliation	Contact details
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Dear International Elephant Foundation Team,

On behalf of The PEACE Project, the rural communities that live amongst the desert adapted elephants and the elephants themselves, I am writing to thank you for your support through your grant of \$9589.87 in 2020. The past year wasn't an easy one for EHRA as an organisation and for conservation in general. We lost our major source of income over night and this affected the way we operate as an organisation. We couldn't carry out our main objective of patrolling every second week to keep an eye on the elephants and their wellbeing. However your grant was a light at the end of the tunnel for the PEACE project which was able to swiftly respond to community requests for help when elephants raided their gardens or when they needed general safety training.

With your funding, we were able to hold 17 community seminars, educate more than 332 people in total, and to conduct field patrols by vehicle with the participants to monitor the safety of the free-roaming desert-dwelling elephants.

Your grant is helping us make elephant-human co-existence a reality in North-western Namibia. As we continue striving toward this goal, I sincerely hope we maintain our association.

Thank you again for your generous support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Harris".

Rachel Harris, Managing Director and The PEACE Team!

CONSERVATION NEEDS, PROGRESS AND RESULTS

The major challenges in Namibia's Kunene and northern Erongo regions where the desert-dwelling elephants live are the escalating conflicts over resources such as water, food and habitat. Since the elephants returned (after fleeing because of war) to the southern Kunene Region, human-elephant conflict has caused a continuous decline in elephant numbers. The desert-dwelling elephants are unique in that they have adapted to survive in the semi-desert environment; they have developed phenotypic differences as compared to their inland counterparts. The Ugab West population has a current elephant population size of 21 elephants. The population size is statistically small already; it might not recover if more elephants die. These herds face several biological constraints. One is high calf mortality. From 2014 to 2021 10 elephant calves were born; and none survived. This is a major concern to both the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and to EHRA. In addition, in 2017, four elephants in a population of then 31 desert-adapted elephants residing in the Ugab River were shot as 'problem animals'. The conservation issue is that human-wildlife conflict in our project area is a cycle. Elephants destroy human possessions → the humans react violently → the elephants react violently → the elephants get declared as problem animals and get shot. One of the approaches we have to breaking this cycle is teaching community members and school children about conservation and conservancies. Since its beginning in 2009, EHRA's PEACE Project has trained more than 2000 people, and we have seen growing tolerance towards elephants in many communities. We emphasize the benefits of conservation to tourism, to communities and to conservancies, as well as the role of conservancies, and we encourage residents to join their local conservancies and become conservation activists. A changed perspective is the only way to empower the local people to secure a sustainable future for themselves and for the wildlife in their area.

Despite Covid19, we have still held smaller, shorter seminars for individual farms and groups of school learners (listed in table below).

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) *To reduce human-elephant conflicts (including property damage and human injury or deaths from elephants) through educational PEACE Conflict Mitigation Courses, training and capacity building for communities, residents, Traditional Authorities (TA) and conservancies.*

Type of training	Date	Participants	Area / Conservancy / Region
Community seminar.	03/02/2020- 05/02/2020	24	Omatjete Area
Community seminar.	28/02/2020- 01/03/2020	25	De Riet Farm/ Doro Inawas Conservancy

Community seminar.	02/03/2020- 04/03/2020	21	Ohungu Conservancy
One day Goat herders outreach.	01/03/2020	12	Ohungu Conservancy
One day Goat herders outreach.	05/03/2020	17	Ohungu Conservancy
One day School pupils outreach.	29/05/2020	10	Sorris Conservancy
One day School pupils outreach.	30/05/2020	10	Sorris Conservancy
One day School pupils outreach.	31/05/2020	10	Sorris Conservancy
Commercial farms PEACE project outreach.	20/07/2020- 26/07/2020	98	Kunene, Erongo and Otjozondjupa Region.
Community seminar	14/09/2020- 16/09/2020	11	Sorris Conservancy
Community seminar	17/09/2020- 19/09/2020	6	Sorris Conservancy
Community seminar	20/09/2020- 22/09/2020	12	Ohungu Conservancy
Community seminar	23/09/2020	8	Okapereke Village
Community seminar	06/11/2020	13	Ongejama Tjovike Village
School seminar	18/11/2020- 28/11/2020	15	!Anixab Primary School
Community seminar	19/01/2021- 29/01/2021	20	Otjomukona/Otjingore/ Okotjize
Community seminar	20/02/2021- 25/02/2021	12	Okamaere
Community seminar		8	Okapereke
Total		332	17 villages

2) *To stop the destruction of an elephant(s) as a problem animal through increased awareness of the consequences of such an action.*

This has been successful in the communities in our core project area where we have held seminars. People who live in villages along the western Ugab and Huab Rivers have accepted elephants as co-inhabitants of the land and are now looking for solutions on how to avoid conflict with the elephants and how to benefit financially from the elephants in a sustainable manner. In addition through training on the importance of elephants to conservation and tourism, the main conservancies that we work with now recognize the value of elephants ALIVE, and do not support trophy hunting of the Ugab West population.

3) *To train community “elephant guards” who independently can lead educational theory courses within their conservancies and act as the first response team during elephant-related emergencies.*

Elephant guards (except for the ones in Bushmanland, Divundu area) successfully completed the first part of their training last year, before we received the funding from IEF. The elephant guards have been using the practical knowledge learned during their training in the seminars. They have been accompanying the PEACE team to all seminars and have proven themselves to be assets to the practical part of the trainings.

Another training of elephant guards took place in October 2020 in the Bwabwata National park. This training was successful as all printing costs for the training were covered for by IEF.

CHANGES TO THE INITIAL GRANT PROPOSAL

- We identified a need to train goat herders in human-elephant conflict hotspots. Goat herders are the people who work in the bush to herd goats, making them more likely to meet elephants. It is difficult for these people to attend our three-day seminars, as they are employed by the flock owners and cannot take leave for three days. We therefore offered goat herders from two villages (which elephants frequently visited) a one-day training in the afternoons when they returned from the field. The herders are often from another part of Namibia or Angola and therefore in general have no knowledge or experience of elephants.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to continue with our seminars as planned for this year and outlined in the project proposal. Namibia went under stage 1 lockdown on 28 March 2020, which prevented travel and the congregation of groups of more than 10 people. This slowed down seminars in the first half of the year, as the restrictions minimised there was a high demand for trainings and we were able to do more than one seminar per month in the last quarter of the year.
- A major setback occurred when the Ugab River west elephant population (three herds and 4 bulls) moved out of their usual wet season home range and into the eastern commercial farming areas, especially Farms Aspro, Moselle and their neighbors. These are private farms

and a hotspot for elephant shootings. The conflict between people and elephants here are complex and differ from the problems rural farmers face. This is a 2500km² area with roughly 30 commercial farms, that are not only fenced off to each other but also have several fences criss-crossing each farm to control cattle movement. The farmers, experiencing large financial losses through elephants repeatedly breaking fences, often take the law into their own hands. Since the Ugab West elephants moved there in March, we found three adult cows, of which one was a matriarch, missing from the herds, but their calves are present. Between April and July we found three carcasses (unrecognizable at this stage), so we fear they fell victim to the shootings by residents. We have therefore decided to concentrate the PEACE project in that area for the rest of the year. Shannon, PEACE Project Manager, and Elephant Guard Helmut spent the week of July 20-26 visiting farms and presenting seminars to all who would attend to help them live with the elephants without resorting to shooting them. We further have an elephant tracking team present around the clock to monitor activities, report to wildlife crime investigators and assist farmers with any damage caused by elephants. We further have one team surveying the entire area to identify and count the other elephants. This information will be presented to the MEFT and the Elephant Management Plan Committee so they have accurate numbers on the resident elephant population. Currently the main mitigation technique is to shoot elephants, but this is done with no knowledge of the population breakdown. EHRA is also working with MEFT to provide sustainable and non-lethal mitigation strategies for the commercial farmers. This includes the provision of an electric fence along the commercial farmer's border. This will have to be fundraised for but seems to be the best method to prevent more elephant deaths. In addition, we are installing solar water pumps at communal farms that experience elephant visits. Connected to many of the pumps, where relevant, we will build elephant specific drinking points, and these will connect to each other to form a safe pathway for elephants which keeps them away from farms and villages.

CONSERVATION OUTCOMES FOR ELEPHANTS AND HUMANS

Since the first community seminar we conducted this year, we have experienced positive attitudes from our attendees. We have introduced the concepts of conservation and protecting Namibia's wildlife to community members, most have accepted it. Most of our attendees have been young people between the ages of 18 and 30. They have been open to conserving wildlife, living amongst elephants and making a sustainable living from wildlife. In our second seminar, we had a 70-year-old man who was not very keen to live with elephants. He left the seminar with a clear change of perspective towards elephants. He is a respected member of his community, and we are confident that what he learned about elephants and the importance of their conservation will resonate far beyond him into his village and further.

The major accomplishments in the area where PEACE has worked to date include:

- A change of heart from a conservancy leader who was anti-elephant and who was part of the “no-elephants” group. He is now willing to work with EHRA and support our conservation efforts.
- We have not experienced any negative complaints from community members, and we have not had any unfortunate incidents for either elephants or humans in the communal areas.
- When elephants arrive in villages where we have held seminars, people inform one another of the whereabouts of the elephants and they take the necessary precautions to stay safe.
- The Elephant Guards are increasingly recognized within their communities and are called upon to solve any conflict issues. This empowers the communities.

The environmental habitat in which the elephants live benefits greatly from elephants. This area has suffered years of overgrazing from livestock overstocking. This usually creates an opportunity for encroacher bush to invade and become an ecological problem. But the area has no indication of extreme bush encroachment. Elephants, being mega herbivores, are known to push over trees, in the process opening up spaces, allowing grasses to grow and providing food for the smaller herbivores and grazers. This is evident in the Erongo and Kunene Regions where elephants freely roam.

IMPACTS ON HUMANS AND ELEPHANTS

With our seminars this year, despite the Covid-19 limitations, we have trained 332 people from 17 different villages and 11 commercial farms. This number includes 272 adults and 60 school children. However, this number does not take into account the ripple effect of training even one person in a village.

“My grandmother is always shouting loudly at the elephants when they come to our house, I will tell her not to do that anymore.

We must clap our hands”. ~

Peace Project participant, Nov 2020.

We fully understand the impact that training one person has, because at least one person who has attended our seminar goes back home and speaks to their whole family, and family members go out into the community and speak to people in the community. In this way more people than we can realise are indirectly impacted by our seminars and trainings.

The elephants that have benefitted from our seminars include the Ugab West resident elephants (≈ 21 elephants), the Huab elephants (≈ 45 elephants) and the Khorixas elephants (which are ≈ 47). Our patrols with the PEACE seminar participants have reduced illegal killing of elephants and conflict between people and elephants in those areas. The issues arise in places EHRA hasn't reached yet.

PROBLEMS/ISSUES OCCURRING/DISCOVERED (SOME DESCRIBED PREVIOUSLY)

What we have discovered with the recent PEACE projects is that people want the MEFT to compensate them for the damages caused by elephants. The MEFT however has failed to do this, urging people to rather learn to live with elephants. However when an elephant is labelled as a “problem animal,” MEFT then shoots it and gives the meat to community members. This has encouraged people to complain about minor damages so that an elephant can be labelled as a problem animal so that they can get meat.

Damages to fences on commercial farms is a major unresolved issue for farmers which is a big threat to elephant conservation. There is to date, however, no solutions from all stakeholders to this problem, and this is a big concern.

WAS YOUR PROJECT SUCCESSFUL? STATE SHORT AND LONG-TERM GOALS THAT YOU ARE USING TO EVALUATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The project has been very successful so far.

We were able to witness changed attitudes of community people towards elephants: there are reduced complaints about elephants to EHRA in the communal lands where we have been working for the past few years. Within our focal area there has been no recent request to the MEFT to shoot a “problem animal”. This is an indication of success in the PEACE project.

To find long term, sustainable solutions to human-wildlife conflict in Kunene and Erongo Region: On 29 July, two conservancy chairpersons wrote a formal letter to the director of MEFT asking them to stop shooting the desert-dwelling elephants on commercial land and that the Ugab West elephants be moved back west of the Ugab River. This is a powerful indication of positively changed attitudes. EHRA is now officially recognized by government and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism as a custodian for elephants in Erongo and Kunene Region. MEFT has invited us to two different “Elephant Management Plan” meetings, and they have asked EHRA to do a head count of the Erongo and Kunene elephants.

BASED ON THIS PROJECT, WHAT IS THE “NEXT STEP” FOR THIS PROJECT AND DOES IT HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CONSERVATION ACTIONS?

The PEACE project is recognized as an important project bringing practical solutions to conservation in Erongo and Kunene Region. An Environmental Education Centre is in its final stages of completion, a first of its kind in Kunene Region. We have completed the environmental education curriculum for visiting school learners and we are waiting for the Ministry of Education to recognize and approve it.

We also plan to start a fund to provide relief to people suffering elephant damages. Many people struggle to accept elephants as co-inhabitants of the land because of the financial constrain involved in making such a decision. If this fund is successful, many people's attitudes towards elephants will change and cohabiting with them will not be so hard. This will help ensure the long-term survival of desert-dwelling elephants in Namibia. With the funds we aim to: help farmers by repairing fences, construct electrical fences and walls to try to keep elephants off the commercial farms, to develop elephant corridors where elephants can move from one area to another without entering commercial farms (project proposed, not yet operational due to lack of funds).

To further lessen the financial impact of living with elephants, EHRA has secured a donor for a project to replace 41 diesel pumps with solar installations, meaning that when elephants drink water it does not cost the farmer anything. Paying for diesel to pump water that a herd of elephants drink, and not your cattle is a major cause for contention. So far three solar pumps have been installed and local people are very satisfied with them.

Our Elephant Guard program has been very successful to date, community members rely on elephant guard knowledge which they have picked up through the PEACE project, to make right decisions to avoid conflict with elephants.

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

In January we had arrived at the small village of Otjomukona to offer training to about 12 people. We met a very stern lady who had a little vegetable garden that was raided by a bull elephant just a day before we arrived. As we spoke it became clear to me that she had previously attended a PEACE project. She demonstrated how she managed to chase the elephant off, however it was too late as it had eaten up most of her melons and corn. As I looked around her garden I saw worn-out old rags dipped in old engine oil. She had also planted chilli all over the little garden. I prepared myself for an outburst about elephants and how terrible they are. On the contrary she smiled and said to me 'I regard that bull as my firstborn son, we love each other but we don't always get along, he does this once in a while. He knew the engine oil has worn-off that's why he came into the garden but I will get new engine oil and then he will have to allow me to eat from my garden!'

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ROLE

Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism: Partner in Conflict Mitigation efforts. Field Staff join PEACE seminars; explain legal aspects around elephants; help with vehicles and transport for seminar participants as their schedules and budget permit.

Conservancies (Otjimboyo, Tsiseb, Sorris Sorris, Oyetu, Ohungu): Partners in conservation. Contribute in kind to seminars with meat and transport and assist in identifying participants.

Namibia Chamber of the Environment (NCE): EHRA is a new member of the NCE, we don't have much experience with the chamber as yet. However hope to jointly work towards the betterment of elephant conservation efforts and will apply for funding to support our Environmental and Elephant Education Programme.

DO WE INTEND TO PUBLISH OR PRESENT FINDINGS AT ANY SYMPOSIA/CONFERENCE?

Due to Covid-19 large gatherings are still discouraged but we usually share interesting findings at the Namibian Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS), in conjunction with the Namibia Scientific Society, and we write articles for the NEWS newsletter and/or magazine.

Of course we will present the project at the IEF Virtual Conference in November 2021.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF EHRA ACTIVITIES

Press Articles

- The Namibian Newspaper - [The Namibian Newspaper - Article on EHRA's work during COVID 19 Lockdown](#)
- The Namibian - [The Namibian Newspaper - Advice for residents on Swakopmund Elephant](#)
- Blog post - '[Blog post by 'Kate on Conservation'](#)
- Mongabay Kids. <https://kids.mongabay.com/helping-humans-and-desert-elephants-coexist/>

TV Coverage

- [BBC News BBC News](#) - Interview with EHRA Managing Director Rachel Harris
- [ZDF Volle Kanne Interview with EHRA Program Manager Christin Winter](#)
- [German News Channel NTV Interview with Christin Winter](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDRESSES

Website: www.ehranamibia.org

Facebook: EHRANamibia

Instagram: ehranamibia

Twitter: @ehranamibia

FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

Changes to the financial expenditure.

1. **Food for all participants during the workshops:** Normally the PEACE workshops take a maximum of 17 participants, but due to Covid19 we often had a restriction of max 10 participants. This lowered the cost of food significantly. We under spend with \$927 which contributed to the fuel expenses.
2. **Project Leader salary @ \$180/course (15 courses/year):** We initially budgeted for 15 seminars per for the year. We ended up offering 16 seminars for the year. We overspend with \$180.
3. **Elephant Guard teaching materials for four Elephant Guards:** Since the first training was offered before the reception of funds from IEF most of the printing costs were already covered. We underspend by \$1321.5 and this was added to the fuel budget.
4. **Travel expenses: Fuel cost @\$200/course (15 courses/year):** When lockdown restrictions were lifted in Namibia there was a sudden high demand for trainings. Even in distant areas we usually do not focus on. This then increased our fuel expenditure by \$ 1719.2, far beyond what we had budgeted for.

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM IEF	AMOUNT USED FROM IEF FUNDS
<i>Supplies: Course Teaching Material @\$35 per course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00
<i>Services: Food for all participants during the workshop @\$260/course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$3,900.00	Feb 2020 = \$180.7
		Mar 2020 = \$238.1
		Apr 2020 = \$0.00
		May 2020= \$141.9
		Jun 2020 = \$231.00
		Jul 2020 = \$79.7
		Sept 2020 = 257.8
		Nov 2020 = 163.8
		Dec 2021 =300
		Jan 2021 =480
		Feb 2021=510
		Mar 2021=390
TOTAL		\$2973

<i>Services: Vehicle maintenance costs @ \$50/course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00
<i>Project Personnel: Project Leader salary @ \$180/course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$2,700.00	\$180* 17 courses = \$2880
<i>Project Personnel: Project Coordinator salary @ \$180/course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00
<i>Elephant Guard teaching materials for four Elephant Guards (laminated teaching sheets, handouts, PVC posters etc.).</i>	\$1,725.00	\$403.5
<i>Travel expenses: Fuel cost @\$200/course (15 courses/year).</i>	\$1,500.00	Feb 2020 = \$176
		Mar 2020 = \$196.8
		Apr 2020 = \$0.00
		May 2020 = \$149
		Jun 2020 = \$271
		Jul 2020 = \$208.6
		Sept 2020 = 268.8
		Nov 2020 = 134
		Dec 2020 = 330
		Jan 2021 = 515
		Feb 2021 = 440
		March 2021 = 530
TOTAL		\$3219.2
TOTAL USED		\$9475.7

Funds received from IEF= \$9589.87. Total funds used = \$9475.7. Available funds = \$114.17

